Translation of the Friday Sermon of 5th August 1983 Delivered by Hazrat Mirza Tahir Ahmad – Khalifatul Masih IV

> Observe Prayer at the two ends of the day and parts of the night close to the day. Surely virtues drive away evils. This is to remind those who would remember.
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> Be thou steadfast for surely Allah suffers not the reward of the pious to perish.
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> Why then were there not among the generations before you persons possessed of intellect who would have forbidden corruption in the land except the few We saved from among them? But the wrongdoers followed that by which they were afforded ease and comfort so that they became offenders.
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> *The Holy Quran*. Hud: 115 – 117.

Allah is worshipped for various reasons and various benefits are derived therefrom. There are two distinct aspects of worship: one is the duty to Allah, and the other is the duty to His creation. The most important constituent of the duties towards Allah is Prayer; it has the unique capacity of generating virtues and removing ills. As time progresses, Islamic culture becomes increasingly clean and attractive. *The Holy Quran* enjoins that for this purpose also, we should supplicate with full consciousness of our responsibilities.

Allah assures us that He will hear such prayers and, as a result, our culture would acquire the requisite virtues. He admonishes that the day should be protected at both ends in the same way as sentries are posted at the two ends of a territory that they are asked to protect. It appears to be His intention that the whole day should be intertwined with prayers. He also expects us to rise at night in His remembrance. He assures us that virtues always counteract evil. Apart from strengthening connections with Allah, Prayer beautifies and decorates our cultural life in this world. This is a Divine law which is not subject to alteration. It is an eternal decree that virtue removes and eliminates evil.

This may appear contrary to the common human belief that evil is stronger than virtue. Have you not often heard it said that evil has replaced virtue? *The Holy Quran* is a unique Book which not only corrects this wrong impression but also continues to guide us throughout our lives. God unequivocally states that virtue is stronger than evil. Amongst people where you find evil you can be sure that once virtue had existed. As virtues decline, and as there can be no vacuum, evil begins to take their place. Nothing can exist in a vacuum, and it must be borne in mind that evil is a negative quality which can only take root in the absence of virtue, just like darkness can only be felt when there is no light. Once you become acquainted with the Divine revelation in *The Holy Quran*, you will be amazed how far-reaching and correct are the consequences detailed therein.

Bear in mind, therefore, that virtue is positive and evil can exist only as a direct result of the absence of virtue. It is impossible for evil to co-exist alongside virtue. Therefore, Allah enjoins that you should raise your sights and become virtuous. He directs that we should

safeguard ourselves by engaging in prayers which will protect us from evil of all kinds. This is a summary of the verses that I have recited before you.

There are two kinds of worshippers: First, those who, despite prayers, cannot get rid of their weaknesses and second, those who, as a result of prayers, get progressively closer to Allah. They find in themselves a revolution. Even their temperaments undergo a visible change. They begin to attract others who find their company exceedingly pleasant. One never fears that any harm can come from them - Instead, one always expects that some good will come out of keeping their company. It is this category of people who are the true worshippers of Allah. The outward attributes are proof enough that they are true worshippers of Allah.

If, in spite of regular prayers, vices continue, you can be sure that your prayers are defective. According to *The Holy Quran*, prayers drive away evil, and if you do not witness this in yourselves, you can be sure there is a flaw somewhere which needs to be corrected. I will try to explain this with an example: If you begin to pour water into a vessel that contains oil, the water will settle at the bottom and the oil will come up to the surface. If you fill the vessel to the brim with water, there will be no room left for oil and there will be none left in the vessel. Virtues are weighty and in their presence vices just cannot exist.

The Holy Quran, in various places, and in varying ways, has explained this phenomenon. Allah says: Truth has come and falsehood has vanished. Falsehood is bound to perish.'[1] It is impossible for the two to co-exist. Falsehood cannot withstand truth as darkness cannot withstand light. In another place, it is stated:

> He sends down water from the sky so that valleys flow according to their capacity and the streaming torrent bears swelling foam on its surface. Just as a similar kind of foam bubbles up from that from which they kindle heat from the fire seeking ornaments or utensils. Thus does Allah illustrate truth and falsehood. Now as to the scum it passes off like as jetsam, but as to that which benefits people it stays on the earth. Thus does Allah set expound things.[2]

Vices are like foam and as they have no substance they do not last. Those qualities which have been created for the benefit of human beings have been invested with everlasting values. They are eternal. Those who study *The Holy Quran* in a cursory manner sometimes suggest that they see a phenomenon opposite to that described above. They argue that after supremacy of a religion, decline sets in, and vices once again take root. Virtues rise and fall like waves, while vices appear to be permanent. This does create confusion for some, as there is an apparent contradiction.

On the surface, this observation may seem reasonable, but an in-depth study will reveal that only that which *The Holy Quran* has revealed is true. It should be remembered that virtue begins to appear through Prophethood at a time when the world is overwhelmed with vice. At such a stage the environment supports vice and the cultural life of the people concerned seems saturated with evil. *The Holy Quran* referring to the time of the advent of the Holy Prophet, peace be on him, says:

[1] *The Holy Quran*. Bani Israel [Children of Israel]: 82.
[2] *Quran*. Al Rad [The Thunder]: 18.

> Corruption has flourished over land and sea because of what people's hands have wrought that He may make them taste the fruit of some of their doings so that they may retreat.[3]

Despite these conditions, the world has witnessed that after his advent, virtue began to replace vice. This did actually happen in spite of the fact that, at that time, to a casual observer, all power and strength seemed to side with vice while virtue appeared helpless.

In this instance, we well know that virtue did reappear; not with the assistance of any worldly force, nor on account of any compulsion, it appeared under apparently adverse conditions and when it was least expected to flourish. If you feed into a computer details of all the vices that had found deep roots in the society at the time of the advent of the Holy Prophet, peace be on him, and feed into it also his teachings and the data that the Holy Prophet, peace be on him, who was previously generally acknowledged as a most respected person, but became the prime target of the wrath of his people once he declared that he was the recipient of revelation from God and that his own near and dear ones deserted him, and most of his admirers and friends had turned away from him: what do you think the computer will tell you?

Obviously, it will reach the apparently logical conclusion that there was no chance whatsoever of virtue dominating vice. But see what in fact happened. Allah says: Why don't they observe that at the end of each day that passes, the territory covered by the virtue of the Holy Prophet, peace be on him, expands at the expense of the territory once filled with vice. Under these conditions, how can we imagine that those whose territory is being shrunk all the time can dominate? By Divine command, virtue can and does take root when apparently all odds appear in favour of vice.

According to *The Holy Quran*, virtue is a positive force. This, you must remember, is an eternal and unalterable law of nature. When virtue appears, the negative forces of vice disappear. Vices appear among people only when they neglect to protect the positive forces of virtue. As long as virtue exists in them, there is no question of vice spreading. A careful study of the history of the peoples of the world will reveal that even after a spiritual and moral decline, certain virtues remain which form the nucleus of future progress.

The concepts in the Stone Age, or in earlier eras, were totally different from contemporary concepts. The ancient people led a most degraded life. Through the advent of Prophets, civilization was introduced. After the death of the Prophets, however, they often reverted to evil but they never quite fell to the level at which they were when the Prophets first appeared.

The advent of every Prophet raised their moral and spiritual levels.

The concept of freedom and human rights that one witnesses amongst the people of today is in no way comparable with the concept that existed in the minds of the earlier inhabitants of this planet, say, some two thousand years ago. Although the world, even today, is full of vice, it can be argued that in many spheres a much higher standard has been attained through the centuries. This is a direct result of some virtues having taken such firm roots that they would not permit vice to uproot them.

[3] Ibid. Al Rum [The Byzantines]: 42.

When I was a student at the University of London, a friend used to ridicule the teachings of Islam, but soon the world was to witness a catastrophe that had overtaken the western nations. My friend who, by and large was a reasonable person, began to appreciate my point of view. I explained that he was only comparing the conditions prevailing in the period when the Holy Prophet, peace be on him, lived with the period after he passed away. The unimaginably exalted position that the Holy Prophet, peace be on him, occupied and the blessings that flowed from him, inevitably showed a decline after his death. This was only natural. How could one expect things to continue at the same level as they existed during the lifetime of the Holy Prophet, peace be on him.

To get at the truth, I said to my friend that he should compare the period during which the Holy Prophet, peace be on him, lived, with the period immediately preceding him. At the time of the advent of the Holy Prophet, peace be on him, see what conditions prevailed in Arabia, and carefully observe the heights that the same people attained during the Holy Prophet's own lifetime.

His departure from this world naturally resulted in a decline, but by no means did the society fall to the level to which it had sunk when he appeared. Even after the decline, in the earlier centuries of Islam, when compared with pre-Islamic periods, enviable benevolence is evident. Can the pre-Islamic era be compared with the Umayyad and Abbasid periods? We feel sad only when we compare these periods with the years when the Holy Prophet, peace be on him, was alive.

What he gave to this world was by no means lost immediately after he departed. For thousands of years the benefits continued to accrue. Even after fourteen centuries having elapsed, in certain spheres Muslims of today can be favourably compared with followers of other faiths. For example, the Holy Prophet, peace be on him, had prohibited Muslims to indulge in cruelties. We are unhappy that we have declined from the levels that had been achieved during the lifetime of the Holy Prophet, peace be on him, but when compared with other people, Muslims, even today, in many ways are much better off.

We are indeed indebted to the Holy Prophet, peace be on him, that some of the virtues that we have been able to retain have prevented vice to take their place. At the advent of every Prophet, the moral and spiritual values of his people rise. On every such occasion, some weighty virtues are retained and vice has never been able to replace them. The history of the world is a witness that each successive age has shown some progress over its preceding period and every time the cause can be traced to the advent of a Prophet. It is prophethood alone that can succeed in inculcating and promoting moral and spiritual values.

Even today amongst us Ahmadis, due entirely to prophethood, virtues are replacing vice and are taking root. The only real difference between us and others is that we have the benefit of prophethood whereas others have denied the benefit to themselves. Although we have entered an era in which virtues are replacing vice, take care that with all your strength you must cling to virtues. Do not disregard the history of mankind. Whenever positive forces decline, they are replaced by negative forces. If you get engulfed by vice, as far as you are concerned, the teachings of Islam will be of no avail.

The only way to drive out vice is to adopt virtues. We are indebted to the Promised Messiah, peace be on him, that he has created a Movement, members of which pay much attention to virtues and avoid vice. They attempt to act righteously to support his virtuous teachings and they find in themselves a repugnance and aversion towards vice. Hypocrites in our Movement, despite their great efforts, have never had much success. Our power of defence springs directly from virtue. But beware; this will continue only if you pursue virtue. If you weaken in this respect, vice will once again rise to the surface.

Also remember that it is entirely up to you to safeguard virtue. Allah has made it clear that He does not permit decline of a people except when, by their own misdeeds, they bring it upon themselves. God never supports vice nor does He permit it to take root among a people whom He has guided. His gifts are withdrawn only when you do not value them. You are fortunate in that when you are called upon to act righteously, you listen and act accordingly. When the opposite becomes true, people are destroyed. Decline takes place only when people listen to evil and hasten to adopt it. Guard this distinction which has been bestowed upon you zealously.

I have been told that as a result of my recent sermons, considerable improvement in the matter of offering congregational prayers and certain other related matters is becoming visible. In some cases, worshippers are overflowing the mosques.

In the sight of Allah, a picture depicting overflowing mosques is most attractive. O Ahmadis for all times to come! Listen to virtuous admonitions and act thereon. However, every now and then subject yourselves to a test, only to make sure of the genuineness of the values that you are deemed to have adopted. Results can be judged from your progress. If your prayers are genuine, you will undoubtedly progress in virtues and vice will disappear. It is not enough to say that we offer our prayers regularly. Unless you witness that prayers are driving out weaknesses and vices, you cannot be sure that your prayers are genuine and are pleasing to God.

Some apparently insignificant matters have also adversely affected Ahmadis. One of them is abusive and loose talk, and the other is use of abusive language. Cultural decline in our country has reached such a low that one hears abusive language all the time. A farmer who is dependent on the labour and health of his cattle often abuses them and, at least verbally wishes them ill. The environment has become so poisonous that unless you are actively engaged in acquiring virtue, you may not succeed in warding off vice. To cleanse your mouths, you must be continuously engaged in the remembrance of Allah. If your mouth is perfumed with the praises of Allah, there will be no room for abuse. At the same time you must not forget invoking blessings and salutations to the Holy Prophet, peace be on him. The extent to which you acquire this habit will determine how much you have been able to rid yourselves of abuse.

Another weakness that I have seen is quarrelsome conversation and unbecoming conduct between husband and wife and indulgence in sarcasm. How can a husband treat his wife as if she has no individual personality of her own and is a servant of his and his parents? Some believe that it is their right to abuse their wives and even on slight neglect of her duties towards their parents, they feel justified in turning her out of their houses. This trend is

wholly unjustified and can attract the severest penalties from God, even Hell. It is bound to deprive you of the tranquillity of Heaven that you may be hoping for.

The opposite is equally true. Some women think it is their right to abuse their husbands, or their parents, and that their husbands must not, under any circumstances, retaliate. This is dangerous and unfortunately this trend is not confined to one or two houses. Because of close relationship these habits spread like wild-fire throughout the whole family. In the culture that we have inherited from the Holy Prophet, peace be on him, afflictions and misery in one house soon spread to other members of the family.

The Holy Prophet, peace be on him, has said that the whole Muslim Community is like one body. If a thorn pricks one's toe, the whole body begins to suffer. Similarly, if affliction and misery appears in one house, it spreads to houses of other members of the Community. Why then, instead of choosing a path that would take you to Heaven, do you tread a path that hurts you and your neighbours and relations? The relationship between husband and wife must always remain cordial. If this is not possible, Allah directs that you should separate. You should either live together in kindness to each other or part with benevolence. This is what true Islamic culture teaches us. However, even we have not remained immune to the environment.

The question before us is: what method should we adopt to counteract this unfortunate tendency? *The Holy Quran* suggests a solution. In the verses recited at the time of an engagement, both parties are enjoined to adopt piety on the basis of which you supplicate to God. Allah has directed that you should fully discharge your responsibilities towards your spouses. After marriage, both husband and wife should show to the other the same love and respect as one shows to one's own parents. Only then can one attract the blessings of Allah. If this advice is acted upon, no ill-will will be created and greater tolerance and love between husband and wife will accrue, and both will find a heaven on this earth. Avoidance of abuse and sending blessings to the Holy Prophet, peace be on him, will purify your mouths and will prevent its use for abusive language, which is directly interconnected with the relationship between spouses and their respective parents. May Allah permit us to develop these qualities to a high degree.

On being admonished to do well you should at once find in yourselves an irresistible urge to act beneficently. If you act accordingly, be sure that Ahmadis and Ahmadis alone will be given the privilege of creating a heaven on earth. The territory of our heaven will continue to expand at the expense of the tortuous territory under the occupation of our opponents. Eventually this heaven will dominate the entire planet.

I was deeply distressed over a very grievous incident and I felt as if I had been deeply wounded. A very dear servant of the Movement has departed from us in consequence of a sudden accident. Maulana Abdul Malik, who had started on a missionary tour, was severely injured in a car accident near Sheikhupura. While he was being taken from one hospital to another, he breathed his last. This sad news was conveyed to me over the telephone just before I was leaving for the Mosque for the Friday Service. *To Allah we belong, and to Him shall we return*.

Our hearts are greatly grieved at the departing of a devoted servant of the Movement who belonged to one of the topmost and highly respected families of India. He discarded the honours of the world for the honour bestowed by Allah. He belonged to a family whose ancestors were held in very high esteem throughout India and are still so held. Yet his father discarded all these honours and grasped firmly onto the garment of the Promised Messiah, peace be on him, and deemed it as the true honour which was bestowed upon him by Allah's grace.

Maulana Abdul Malik Khan Sahib adopted a life of diligence and sacrifice in preference to a life of ease and comfort and following in the footsteps of his father, he developed admirable qualities. Of all of his father's progeny, he achieved the distinction that not only did he merely devote his whole life to the service of the faith, but discharged the obligations and responsibilities of that position with great distinction and zeal. He never missed the chance of serving the faith always, completely disregarding all other things.

Before starting on his journey two days ago, he came to say goodbye to me and advised me of his plans. I urged him that in view of his indifferent health, he should not undertake such a strenuous journey, but he assured me that he was delighted with every chance of service and urged me to grant him permission to embark on his journey. Allah appreciated his great devotion and summoned him to himself during the course of the journey that he had undertaken for His sake. However deep our sorrow, we are reconciled to the will and pleasure of Allah. Tearful eyes are a mark of human nature. The Holy Prophet, peace be on him, has made us tender-hearted and has instilled human instincts into our souls, but we are not permitted any kind of mourning, nor do we indulge in it.

We have not been taught to despair and we are not acquainted with it. Individuals pass on, but people continue to live irrespective of who comes, and who goes. As a people, they continue to advance all the time. The Ahmadiyya Community is a living Movement. We are pained by the departure of those who pass on, but we do not despair. I hope and I pray that in place of everyone who passes on, Allah will create hundreds and thousands like him. When He calls one Abdul Malik, He may be pleased to bestow upon the Community thousands and hundreds of thousands of Abdul Maliks, for the world is in great need of devoted servants. May Allah never leave us short of sincere servants and may the number of those who devote their lives to the service of the faith continue to increase. May God's angels move the hearts of sincere believers so that in place of one who has departed, tens and scores and hundreds and thousands come forward and should offer themselves to fill the vacancy that has occurred. Amen!

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